

Indigenous Communities Halting Humanity's Race to Disaster

Plundering of fossil fuels continues despite deteriorating climate change.

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Theme: [Environment](#), [Oil and Energy](#)

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It may rank as one of the great ironies in humanity's lifespan that, as our highly educated first world leads the assault on global environments, it is the "backward" indigenous people attempting to curb those attacks. These remarkable occurrences are unfolding across the world, as so-called civilized societies step up their efforts to extract resources which is destroying planetary ecosystems, and resulting in what is now our world's sixth mass extinction.

Over thousands of years, native inhabitants have resided in the sprawling rainforests of South America, the bush and deserts of Australia, the open plains of Africa and North America. Indigenous communities, who comprise 5% of the earth's human population, are inextricably tied to the lands embedded in their souls. This ancient history forges an indelible bond to the territories that are their home, so it is only natural they should wilfully fight in maintaining what is rightfully theirs.

The association that native peoples hold to their surrounding environment has been that of a sustainable one, based on understanding and respect - while the unfeasible exploitation of riches, rampant elsewhere, is an alien and distasteful phenomenon.

Hunting and fishing habits of indigenous societies are deliberately placed in restricted bounds, thereby allowing stocks within their realm to stay at maintainable levels; unlike mass commercial fishing for instance, which has devastated fish species around the world. By 2017, almost 90% of the earth's fish stocks [were either](#) "fully exploited or over-fished".

As wealthy nations march towards disaster through institutionalized, profit-driven strategies, native inhabitants have remained, if undisturbed, as they have been for millenia. Indigenous folk even tolerate and in some cases worship our planet's iconic predators, such as the wolf and eagle of the Himalayas, the jaguar and anaconda of South America, and so on.

Should native populaces be forcibly removed from their respective regions, or the areas desecrated by outside influence, reason of existence is shattered and disintegration follows. The remote tribes of Amazonian Ecuador, like the Waorani people, have a saying that, "The rivers and trees are our life".

The Waorani are threatened by oil exploration and the poisonous chemicals that it spreads. This habitat destruction infringes on the territory of Ecuador's native communities, who have formed stoic gatherings [to protest](#) these policies, along with other harmful practices like mining. The Waorani have vowed to fight and if needs be die where they stand. For many, especially of the older generations, it is better to be killed in their birthplace rather

than be driven out and scattered into the modern world.

Similar viewpoints would seem strange to much of the remainder of humanity which, as the years flick by, are implanted in great concrete landscapes. Today about 55% of the globe's human population live in a city domain or urban area, and that figure is expected to rise above 66% by 2050.

Mankind's growing detachment from nature and the devastation of earthly environments are having enormous impacts. The present extinction rate rivals the fifth great loss of life 66 million years ago, when an asteroid crashed into southern Mexico resulting in apocalyptic worldwide scenes and the ensuing fall of dinosaurs.

Meanwhile, those such as the Native Americans were almost eradicated in the generations after Christopher Columbus "discovered" the continent in 1492. By the time Columbus arrived, there were already 90 million or more native inhabitants living throughout the Americas stretching back centuries.

Columbus himself, who was a colonialist and slave trader, led the way with genocide of the tribal peoples. By 1650 around 95% of the indigenous population of Latin America had been wiped out, as a result of large-scale killings and infectious diseases carried by the colonial settlers.

Following English Captain James Cook's appearance on the Australian east coast in August 1770, there was an estimated total of more than 500,000 Aborigines living in the country. Aboriginal roots in Australia trace tens of thousands of years into history. Captain Cook, who was killed in Hawaii during spring 1779, was not responsible for what followed - but by the year 1900, Aboriginal numbers in Australia had been decimated by over 90% to less than 50,000, mostly due to death from foreign-introduced maladies. Thousands of Aborigines were also murdered by British troops and settlers, systematically displacing the natives from their lands and claiming it for themselves.

In more recent times, indigenous groups in Australia have been protesting against ongoing oil and mining ventures, while also highlighting their long history of persecution.

Currently unfolding on the other side of the world in Canada are sustained actions, by First Nations groups, to prevent a multi-billion dollar gas pipeline from running through northern British Columbia. One member, Jennifer Wickham of the Wet'suwet'en community, said that,

"The goal has always been the same for Canada and indigenous people: it's to remove us from our land and have access to the resources".

Similar circumstances have played out elsewhere in Canada, and also in the United States. Remnants of America's indigenous societies have protested the erection of oil pipelines, like Keystone XL, from infringing on their territories and sucking the area dry of its natural substances.

These policies continue despite climate change deteriorating at an alarming rate, with world carbon emissions at an unprecedented high. The ceaseless plunder and burning of fossil fuels surely cannot last into the future, should humans wish the globe to remain habitable as a whole.

Mainly responsible for the environmental devastation are indeed those wealthy, first world countries like Canada and the US, or rather their ruling elites - whose systems of governance have been usurped by massive corporate and vested interests, increasingly entwined in the state over the past couple of generations.

Crucially, there is little separation between private power and that of the state, so government strategies are engineered to benefit sectors of privilege and influence. The American president **Donald Trump** is a mega-rich corporate businessman stretching back decades, akin to his father before him, real estate developer Fred Trump.

As president, Trump has sought particularly harmful initiatives to further enrich his base. The US leader's assaults on the environment, since almost the first day of entering office, will continue unchecked as his administration pursues a scheme designed to maximize profits.

One need look at some of the figures constituting Trump's cabinet, like major investment bankers **Steven Mnuchin** and **Wilbur Ross**, while **Sonny Perdue**, the US Secretary of Agriculture, is a noted climate change skeptic.

Trump's attitude towards global warming is that [he believes](#) it is occurring, but says "I don't want to be put at a disadvantage" by tackling it. His actions are in fact speeding the race to calamity, with America's carbon emissions having risen by over 3% in 2018, the biggest increase in eight years. As America is the planet's second largest greenhouse gas emitter (behind China), and per capita the greatest, these results are having serious repercussions.

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